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Pontoon & Deck Boat
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A photograph of two pontoon boats on a sandy beach. The boat in the foreground is white with blue and silver accents, labeled 'M25'. The boat behind it is also white with blue and silver accents, labeled 'M27'. Both boats have dark blue canopies and are parked on the sand near the water's edge. The background shows a sandy beach and a calm body of water.

M27

M25

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Pontoon & Deck Boat PDB MAGAZINE

Volume 21

Issue No. 2

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MAGAZINE HISTORY



Looking Back — February 2006

By Austa Cook

Here's a little-known fact for you: setting up the February 2006 cover photo of PlayCraft's PowerToon Xtreme 2800 with a 525 horsepower Mer-Cruiser engine was a tricky affair. Why, you may ask? Because when PDB staff photographer Kort Duce climbed up into the tower boat and asked PlayCraft President Jim Dorris to circle them for a good shot, everyone was sent rocking the moment that PowerToon Xtreme came flying in. It took several attempts and some blurry sky-wave-sky pictures, but in the end they managed to capture the PowerToon in action at the Lake of the Ozarks in Missouri.

Another picture-themed highlight from ten years ago had to be Kurt and Nancy Richter's spotlight. In what looked like one of the most unusual towing situations of all time, the article included a photo of a Herbie-esque VW Bug mounted on a pontoon platform, which was on a boat trailer, being pulled by a Ford Lariat.

Don't they know American Towing's number? I thought. Then I flipped the page and saw this little Bug floating on the water—it was literally a Herbie pontoon boat!

Of the build process, Nancy said, "I could see [Kurt's] vision, but I still thought it was a crazy idea. I kept thinking, 'What in the world convinced you to think of this?'"

Seeing how unbelievable the end result was, I could see where she's coming from, but this couple really pulled it off well—the car steering wheel actually steers the boat and the throttle is placed where you



stick shift would go between the seats. It even has the traditional Herbie paint job. The swarms of camera-toting boaters that surrounded the Richters every time they ventured out on the lake was clearly a natural consequence of how awesome this boat was.

One of my personal favorite parts of this issue has to be the lead photo of an article entitled, "So

You Want To Buy A Pontoon Boat." The PDB team asked a local car dealership owner if they could use his lot to take a picture of a pontoon in front for a story. Imagine their surprise when they saw a PDB staff member dressed up as a sleazy boat dealer in a getup that can only be described as hilariously cheesy. I can only imagine the crew didn't even recognize him when they pulled into the lot (which is probably healthy for the man's business on the regular days), because it was a more complete transformation than Cinderella got on the night of her ball. Gelled hair, enormous moustache, big watch, gold chains, a loud suit, and an even louder tie that—and this is one of my favorite parts—isn't even done up all the way. The only thing gaudier than his platinum ring is his toothy smile. It doesn't get much better than this, people.

So what's the takeaway? When photographing any action shots of a PlayCraft model on the water, take a gyroscope. When your spouse has a crazy idea, give it a shot and you might be more popular than the latest Star Wars buzz. And if you see a cheesy pontoon dealer coming your way, take a quick picture before you run away, because it'll be great for belly laughs later. 

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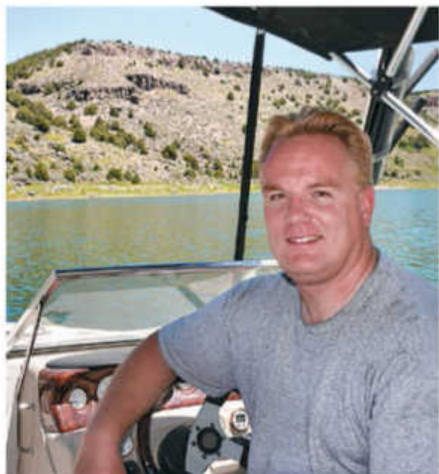


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Fighting Your February Blues

I'd like to think I'm more tolerant of the cold and snowy weather than most boaters. Sure, I still dream of living in a region someday where the concept of winterizing your boat is unheard of, but at the same time the long winters help me appreciate the boating season—at least that's my own justification as I try to convince myself that winter is necessary as well as a good thing.

Like a lot of pontoon or deck boat owners, I winterized last fall and while I gave in to the temptation to surf online for possible spring upgrades a few times around the Christmas holiday, for the most part I've managed to not dwell too much on the non-boating part of the season.

February can be a brutal time of year for boaters and I think that's why boat shows do so well during this stretch. Of course it doesn't help that companies like Carnival and Royal Caribbean are constantly reminding us that cruises to Mexico are taking sun-starved passengers weekly to destinations far better than our work commute.

When you think about it, there are some interesting parallels between cruise ships and our recreational boating. The major cruise lines continue to build more and bigger ships. To fill all those new staterooms, they're trying to attract customers who have never sailed before.

According to the Cruise Lines International Association, just 24 percent of the U.S. population has gone cruising. Notably, those figures somewhat parallel marine industry figures. Specifically, 29 percent of U.S. households had at least one member go boating. Individually, 23.6 percent of all adults in the U.S. participated in boating. Good numbers, yes, but both industries are looking for a lot more.

The good news for our industry is that new powerboat sales are on a multi-year rise with pre-recession levels on the

horizon in several boat segments including deck boats, up 11.3 percent, and pontoon boats, up 6.6 percent. The National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) estimates new powerboat unit sales overall will be up as much as eight percent for 2015 when the industry tallies its final figures. The NMMA anticipates the industry will continue its growth spurt.

"A steadily improving economy and flurry of product in-

novation have boosted new powerboat sales, which is encouraging to see as we head into the winter boat show season, one of the busiest selling periods of the year," said Thom Dammrich, NMMA president. "We anticipate six to eight percent growth in 2016 which would take total new powerboat sales back to pre-recession levels of 250,000 units."

Translation: there might not be a better time than right now to get

out and hit the boat shows to see what all the excitement is about. Nothing beats the February blues like a convention center overflowing with new boats. While vacations can be fun, for long-term enjoyment think bigger and consider buying a new boat this year. After all, the great memories you make with a pontoon or deck boat will last far longer than any seven-night cruise. 

"It doesn't help that companies are constantly reminding us that cruises to Mexico are taking sun-starved passengers weekly to destinations far better than our work commute."

Brady L. Kay,
PDB Editor



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Jake Manning

Surviving Winter

Top 8 ways to feel like you're still on the water

Winter is in full swing and spring is still months away.

For many of us, that means no boating season, dry docked boats, and other horrible inevitabilities we'd rather not think about. (If you're lucky enough to live in a place that stays nice, the rest of us are jealous.) That's no reason to despair, though. There are plenty of things to do, even if you can't be out on the water, that will keep the magic alive. So, without further ado, here are the top eight things you can do to feel like you're still on the water this time of year.

1. Accept the Inevitable, Mourn Your Loss

There's no getting around it: you're dry docked, stuck, forced to see the not-so-watery part of the world. Life might not make sense. You could be in shock and denial. You wonder how you can go on, if you can go on, why you should go on. But you must! There's no point in getting angry at the seasons (they can't do much about it anyway). Bargaining for one more week, even if it works, won't stop the inevitable. So in the end, you're stuck. Welcome to the party, my friend. Here's your complimentary nautical-themed spoon and half-gallon chocolate ice cream. So take a seat, Captain Frowny-Face, and let's get this party started.

2. Run, Run, Run Away

An option, of course, is to avoid the situation altogether. The grass really is greener on the other side, but only because it's not covered with two feet of snow. If you can't afford to live somewhere with nicer weather, there are tons of places

you can go to get in the water. You could go on a cruise to warmer waters or take a trip to the beach. Even renting a hotel room for a night to get access to the pool might rid you of the need to float on the water. If none of those work, the truly desperate could simply run a hot bath, throw on your swimsuit and floaters, and have a good time.

3. Check Up On Your Baby

Even though you can't be on the water, that's no reason to forget about your boat. Winter can be hard on a boat, and it's worth checking up every once in a while to make sure everything is all right. Boatus.com has a free winterizing guide available online. Check it out for some tips and checklists to pay attention to during the winter. When you go to check, you might bring a bottle of wine and have dinner on deck. Just to remember the good 'ole times, you know?

4. Celebrate The Frozen North

Just because outside looks like there was an accident at the flour factory doesn't mean you can't enjoy it. Go ahead, try something new. You might even like it. One of my personal favorites is snowmobiling. It's kind of like boating. You're piloting a motorized vehicle over water (but this time it's frozen) at high speeds. If you have kids, drag them in a tube or sled behind you. It's almost like the real thing! For the fisherman out there, ice-fishing is pretty fun but bring fire and good conversation. If that logic isn't working for you, I understand. But seriously, get out there and try something new.





5. Raingutter Regatta

If you know a boy scout, there's a good chance you've already heard of this. The Raingutter Regatta is the sailboat equivalent of the pinewood derby races. You know, where they build cars out of chunks of wood to race down a track? It's kind of like that. Each kit comes with a piece of wood to be carved and painted as well as a sail and mast



you attach. Instead of racing down a track, however, you race in a (detached) gutter filled with water. The contestants blow into the sail, pushing their boats

along. The first boat to reach the other end wins. While the competition itself is a lot of fun, it could be even more fun making the boats.

6. Feeling Down? Just Add BBQ

Just because it doesn't look like summer outside doesn't mean you can't pretend it is inside. Party like you would if you were on the water. Have barbecues and cookouts—or "cook-ins," as it were. It's cold out, but don't let that stop you from wearing loose-fitting floral shirts and baggy shorts. Break out the sandals and rock out to some

music. The truly ambitious could repurpose their basement as a temporary beach. You're aiming for total summer immersion with this. The more you feel like it's summer, the easier it will be to forget that it's not.

7. Sharks & Icebergs & Subs, Oh My!

There's nothing that warms my heart quite like the great boating classics of Hollywood: *Jaws*, *Titanic*, or, in a pinch, *The Hunt for Red October*. Who doesn't love the touching story about the largest cruise liner created hitting an iceberg and sinking, taking thousands of lives? What about the story of the shark that terrorized a community and sank a fishing boat? Oh. Actually, those might not be "heart-warming" movies. More like tragedies, if anything. Nevertheless, they're still great movies and worth watching. Just be thankful you're not worrying about sharks or icebergs right now.

8. Plan For Next Year

Take the time you would normally be on the water and plan for next year. Some of the fondest memories I have of family vacations are those for which the entire family planned. Set aside an hour, maybe an afternoon, and think about what things you can do. Maybe you can take your boat to a new lake you've never visited before. Maybe you want to have a party to welcome back the nice weather. You could invite friends and family to that. Maybe a new boat is in order for next year. Whatever you plan to do, make it something worth looking forward to; that way, you'll be all the more excited for it to get here. 🍹

PDB's Tackle Box

TIPS FOR THE ANGLER By Dan Armitage

Rod Repair

Field repair for fishing rods

Fishing rods can break during use. This rod is under threat of snapping because the fellow attempting to net the catch is concentrating strain on the blank by holding the rod above the grip and not allowing the entire length of the shaft to flex and absorb the pressure.

Whether in a travel dopp kit, glove box, backpack or stashed under the pontoon or deck boat's steering console, most of us have "ditch kits" containing emergency gear we keep on hand yet hope we never use. That roll of TP in the Ziploc that's been rolling around in the bottom of the rod locker for several seasons brings peace of mind that you are prepared for the worst—until you find yourself past the point of no return with a deck full of guests and discover you may actually need it. Ditto the Pepto-Bismol tablets in that dopp kit and the can of Fix-a-Flat in the tow vehicle. The fact that you may actually have to break this stuff out means something has gone awry.

Things have a habit of going awry while angling (and boating, for that matter). Such unexpected events are part of what makes the activities challenging, or at least interesting, to a lot of us boater/fisherman/outdoor types. Fishing tackle breaks. And often when you are far from the options of replacement or professional repair. But you still gotta fish.

Fishing Rod First Aid Kit

I've got a kit that goes in my fishing vest or tackle box or backpack that contains a butane lighter, short lengths of heat-shrink tubing in various diameters, bamboo skewers, emery board, flexible epoxy, gel-style super glue, and dental floss—as well as several tip-top and running guides. By the latter contents you can guess that the kit is for emergency repair of fishing rods—and you'd be correct about a collection of accessories that has saved several angling adventures over the years. Both for me and a couple of fortunate—if ill-equipped—fishing companions.

If you've ever slammed a rear hatch or car door before making sure it would fully contain the fishing rod(s) you just placed inside, you know how quickly a snapped tip can end a fishing trip, especially if that tip was on the lone rod you have at hand. So always try to bring a spare rod, especially on extended fishing trips.



A popular emergency rod tip repair kit with several different size tips and the special heat-activated glue stick.

Fast In-The-Field Fixes

I've broken rod tips while securing the hook to the holder above the rod handle while bringing the line too tight, setting the hook on a fish with a Bimini or T-top frame overhead, slamming rod locker lids, not being quick enough to clear a porch door, and threading my way through various woods and thickets going to and from the water with rigged rod in hand. Once, I cleared a perimeter of little kids that were attending my learn-to-fish seminar at a boat show when my rod and line got caught in the ceiling fan overhead. The fan jerked the rod free of my hand and swung the rod around a few times before breaking off at the tip making for a dramatic end to that performance.

Emergency rod repair can be simple—IF you have the right tools to tackle it. For example, most rod tips are attached using a special heat-activated glue that melts and releases the metal hardware for just such instances. Often if the break is near the tip you can use matches or a lighter to heat and release the tip-top guide, sand the end of the remaining section until its diameter is small enough to accept it, and insert the tip-top back on that. If you're lucky, there'll be enough glue remaining inside the tip top to reactive and secure the tip top until a more permanent repair can be undertaken. Depending on how much tip was lost, the action of the rod will be affected a bit, but it's better than trying to cast and work baits with the line routed through the next guide down the blank.



The author's field repair kit for fishing rods includes heat shrink tubing, a lighter, two-part epoxy glue, bamboo skewers, super glue and nail polish remover.

Flexible Splint

If the break is farther down the rod, even between guides, I slide a section of heat shrink tubing over one end of the break. Then I insert a bamboo skewer (or three, if needed, to get close to the interior diameter of the rod blank) slathered with epoxy in the hollow core of both ends of the break so that it connects the two pieces, and allow it to cure. Then I slide the heat shrink tube up over the break and heat it to snug-up the connection from the outside. The bamboo and tubing keep the splint as flexible as needed to maintain the rod's action.

Never go anywhere with super glue without a side of nail polish remover to (literally) save your skin.



Guide To Guides

If I break a guide or one or both feet come loose, I use the heat shrink tape to secure each foot on the rod blank until I can get it home and wrap it. If heat shrink application won't work, I'll wrap the feet with the dental floss, which is super-strong and coated with wax so it doesn't slip when you are wrapping or tying it off with a snug knot.

If the metal or ceramic ring inside a guide comes loose, I secure it with the gel-style super glue for a quick fix and get back to the fishing I came there to enjoy. Oh, and I make sure I have a small bottle of nail polish remover handy for when I super-glue my fingers together. 🐸

Dan's Pick:

Princecraft Ventura 192



I like an aluminum deck boat if I am going to be fishing rocky waters and beaching the boat much. The Princecraft Ventura has a nice layout and plenty of fishing features and options. The 19-footer can comfortably accommodate up to a half dozen passengers, with a capacity of ten, and can be powered by an engine ranging from 115hp to 150hp fed by a 50-gallon gas tank. Non-anglers can enjoy a full-width rear padded sundeck and chaise lounge, but the boat's two folding fishing seats, large aerated livewell, and lockable rod storage compartment make it appealing to anglers. What's more, with the Bimini top stowed aft, there is no threat of rods hitting overhead support beams and breaking while casting or setting the hook from the forward fishing deck! 🐸

Princecraft Ventura 192 Specs:

Length:	19' 2"
Beam:	97"
Weight:	2,078 lbs.
Fuel Capacity:	50 gals.
Passenger Capacity:	10
MSRP:	\$32,463 w/Mercury 115 EXLPT outboard
www.hotwoods.com	

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PLACES, FACES, VIEWS, NEWS, PRODUCTS & MORE



Two New Snapless Pontoon Covers

Ameritex Fabric Systems has revealed a great new product for pontoon owners: a pair of towable snapless pontoon boat covers. The SureSeal playpen cover uses an elastomeric rubber extrusion which is impervious to heat and cold and fits into the horizontal groove running along the underside of the boat's railing. Installation is as easy as pressing the insert into the groove, and removing it is achieved by pulling the tabs to break the seal. The cover is watertight and does not come loose in the wind.



Ameritex is also introducing a four-point attachment and ratchet tension system for its playpen cover. It's installed by attaching four corner points to the deck and ratcheting the line tight.

(www.ameritexfabric.com)



Mercury Marine Expands Into British Columbia

Mercury Marine has opened a brand-new facility in Langley, British Columbia. Both Mercury Marine Canada and Land 'N' Sea Canada will call the 50,000-square-foot facility home, and it will serve as home base for the Mercury's dealer network in the Western Canadian Region.

"This new facility will help us better serve our customers across all of Canada," said Georges Jalbert, general manager for Mercury Canada. "Having the ability to expand the market to the western half of the country and provide immediate attention to our customers is paramount to our growth and our success in Canada. This is an exciting time for Mercury Marine. As we close out 2015, we continue to grow and continue to look for ways to better serve our customers. This facility in British Columbia allows us to do that." (www.mercurynewsroom.com)



Who Said It?

Quotes from this issue

"The closest race of the day came in the first class, but it wasn't to determine first place." —Page 30

"So after reading all of this, would you say this model price is entry-level or high-end? I was straying towards the latter until I saw the price tag." —Page 42

"Geared towards everyone and not just those do-it-yourself types, the goal behind this yearly guide is to help owners be more aware of what needs to be done and why." —Page 46



Veranda Marine Announces New President

Xpress Boats and Veranda Marine have appointed Rory A. Herndon as the new company president, which went into effect January 1, 2016. Herndon succeeded his father Rodney Herndon.

Rodney stated that the company "is poised and positioned for continued, successful growth as we transition to the next generation and phase of our business."

Rory is taking over a great team that is focused on continuing the legacy established over 50 years ago by his

Big Deal For Big Baits

Plano's angling engineers have applied their award-winning Hydro-Flo design to the all-new M-Series Hydro-Flo Tackle Bag, a beast of a bag with a manageable footprint and shockingly cavernous interior configured for space-saving storage of big baits via vertical hanging.



Muskie maniacs, swimbait specialists and saltwater jig junkies will love the M-Series Hydro-Flo Tackle Bag that stores up to 25 large lures in clever hanging bait compartments. The M-Series Hydro-Flo's spacious main compartment keeps big baits organized, secure and dry, courtesy of a flow-through design and the reinforced namesake base. The Hydro-Flo base allows water to drain out the bag's bottom for drying or rinsing of lures and retails for \$79.99.

(www.planomolding.com)

grandfather. Xpress Boats has been family-owned and operated since 1966. Growing from humble beginnings in a schoolhouse in Friendship, Ark., today Xpress operates out of a cutting-edge facility in Hot Springs, Ark.

(www.verandamarine.com)

From The Forums

Saying Bye To Rick Fair

Excerpts from recent *PDB* forum exchanges at www.pdbmagazine.com



Sad news spread across the *PDB* Forum last fall of the passing of one of our forum members, Rick Fair.

[WoodenPontoon]: Rick Fair (a.k.a. **Stickman**) has unexpectedly passed away. I don't have any details as of yet, but wish to offer prayers to his entire family. Buckeye Boater, Randy Fair, is his brother.

[BuckeyeBoater]: Dan, Thanks for posting this. We are all pretty much still in shock. We still don't have all the details, but what we do know is Rick and his wife Marilyn were on a mission trip in Nicaragua; they had finished up and stayed a few extra days. On Monday they were in the ocean snorkeling when he suffered a heart attack, and they were unable to revive him. Thanks for the thoughts and prayers; they are certainly appreciated.

[drive2boat]: I would like to add my condolences to the Fair family. No

words are truer than "No one knows what tomorrow holds, so make sure that you know who holds tomorrow." May God bless the Fair family in this time of sorrow and grief.

[Moser]: So sorry to hear of your loss, our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family.

[rickdb1]: Very sorry to hear, Randy. Deepest sympathy to you and your family. Such a devastation at such a young age.

Please feel welcome to share your condolences for the Fair family on our forum page at www.pdbmagazine.com/forum. We all wish them comfort and peace. 🙏

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WHERE'S THE PADDLE?



The first ten people to find the paddle hidden inside PDB magazine will have their names

shared in an upcoming issue! In fall, the paddle was on page 16 in the cardboard box below the fishing reel. Here are the fastest paddle-finders:

Chuck Miller Blandon, Pa.
Jim and Jan Donald Mooresville, N.C.
W.W. Johnson (Johnny) Flagstaff, Ariz.
Ken Braun Hartford, Wisc.
Jack and Teresa Hiatt Thomasville, N.C.
Gary Scheidegger Fremont, Wis.
Joseph Craig Carol Stream, Ill.
Richard Burchill Budd Lake, N.J.
Gary Abel Maumee, Ohio
Ralph and Genevieve Ehrhart Jerseyville, Ill.

As soon as you find the paddle, email its location, your name, and hometown to paddle@pdbmagazine.com. Paddle on! 

TOP 10 Pontoon & Deck Boat PDB BEST BOAT NAMES

During our travels we're always on the hunt for fun and unique boat names so we can pass them on to others who may be looking for ideas.



10. *Moor Often Than Knot*
9. *Aqua Holic*
8. *Jolly Nickers*
7. *Pier Pressure*
6. *Tooned Out*
5. *Nauti Buoy*
4. *Unsinkable II*
3. *Lake To The Party*
2. *Ship For Brains*
1. *Fish & Chicks*

We'd love to hear what you named your boat. Head over to www.facebook.com/pdbmagazine and post a picture. 

Reader Submission Photo



Three-year-old Lauren Penelope Blevins is loving her ride on the family's Crowline down the Mississippi River north of Alton, Ill., where gorgeous sand beaches and clear water await.

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View more recent submissions by clicking the button. 

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Engine:...**19.23%**

GPS/Fishfinder: ...**7.7%**
Flooring:.....**26.92%**

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CONGRATULATIONS MANITOU!

BRP congratulates Manitou Pontoons on sweeping the outboard categories of the 2015 McKainer Barrel Race powered by Evinrude E-TEC engines.

No Wake Zone

New 20hp Equivalent Outboard



Torqeedo has long been an innovator in the electric engine world, but its newest product might just take the cake. The Cruise 10.0 is a 20hp-equivalent, emission-free outboard motor that can move light boats up to 28 mph and move three to ten-ton displacement hulls up to 9 mph.

Torqeedo's range of products encompasses systems from 1hp all the way up to the 80hp high-voltage Deep Blue. The Cruise 10.0 provides a clean, green and quiet alternative for commercial and recreational users who prefer the simplicity and easy handling of a low-voltage system, but require more speed, thrust and power than previously available.

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^{PDB} Spotlight By Austa Cook — ON THE INDUSTRY'S BEST BOATS —

Surf On!

Starcraft's 231 SCX I/O has it all

Technology has come a long way, and one of the many benefits is being able to do some of our favorite sports with ease in more and more places. We have ski resorts making their own snow to extend the season, wakeboarding cables so the boat-less can wakeboard without bumming a ride, and now we don't even have to go to the Big Blue to catch waves anymore—we can surf from the back of a boat! Starcraft is ahead of the game as they work to bring this optional surf system to more of their models, like

the highly popular 231 SCX I/O.

The 231 SCX I/O is a crossover packed with high-end features and head-turning style, and that was before the new surf system was even an option.

"It's a great family boat," says Steve Huber, Starcraft's marketing coordinator. "It's the best-selling SCX model that we have."

The pickle fork bow opens up the interior for incredible lounging room, a bigger cockpit area, and deeper in-floor



storage, while the Dihedral V hull ensures the crossover gives the performance of Starcraft's deck boats a serious competitive edge, making this model perfect for sporty families and friends.

"The 231 SCX I/O has other features that are perfect for the family, such as the family fun seat in the back that pops up so you can face out if someone's swimming," Huber adds.

Key Features

The swim platform in the bow and stern make for plenty of boarding options while enjoying the water, and the stern swim platform puts you in easy reach of the optional Polk stereo remote if you want to change your tunes while hanging out in the back. While not in use, the ladder can also tuck away under a compartment to give you even more room to spread out on this spacious swim deck.

The 231 SCX I/O also boasts courtesy lights, marine-grade speakers, flip-up seat bolsters, and a full fiberglass innerliner. Cool-toned vinyl uphusters all the seating and filler cushions with marine-grade and UV-stable quality, making for a highly comfortable and long-lasting lounge arrangement. One of our favorite features has to be the helm design, which has a beautiful silver-tinged look to it with deluxe switches and faux wood grain paneling that complement the graceful color scheme of the crossover. The 231 SCX I/O also has unbeatable options like the pressurized freshwater sink and shower in the head compartment.



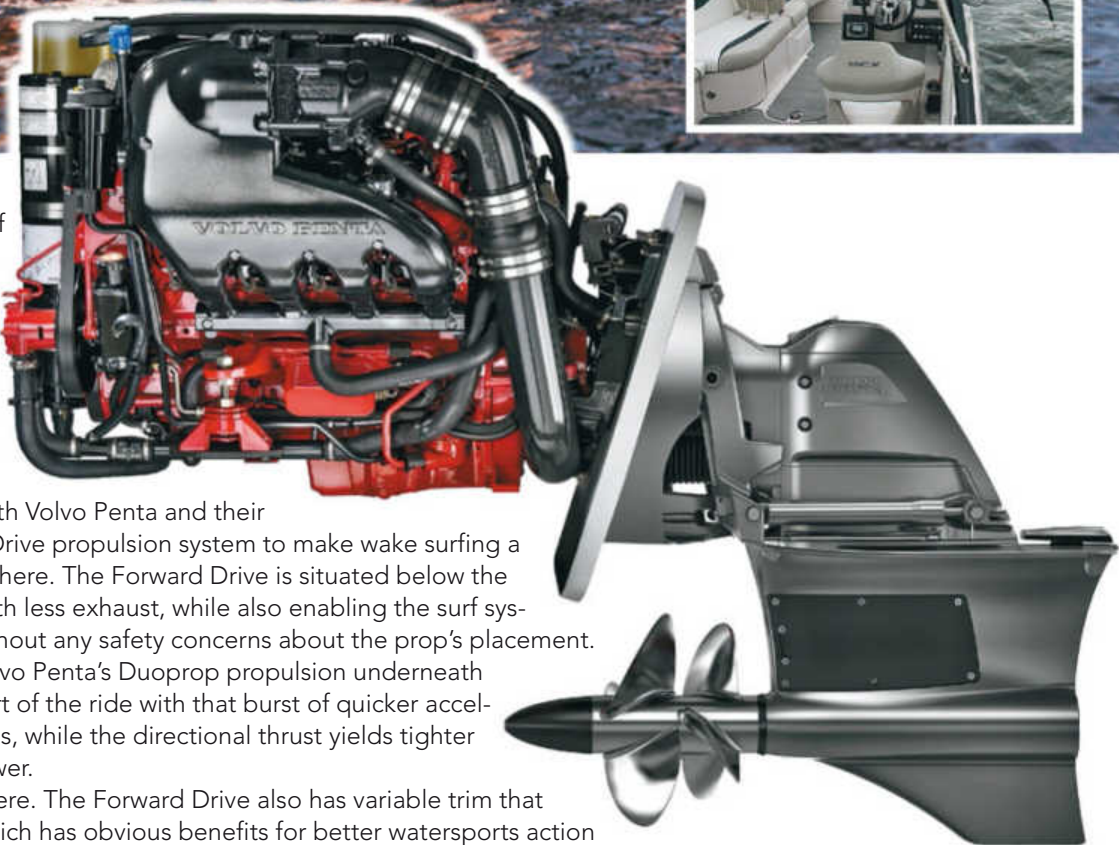


Surf'n On Top

When you take in all of these amenities, it's easy to see why the 231 SCX I/O has already been the favorite of the line. So what is it about this surf system that's bound to push this model's popularity sky-high?

Starcraft has paired with Volvo Penta and their incredible new Forward Drive propulsion system to make wake surfing a reality for boaters everywhere. The Forward Drive is situated below the boat for a quieter ride with less exhaust, while also enabling the surf system to be hooked up without any safety concerns about the prop's placement. The smooth power of Volvo Penta's Duoprop propulsion underneath also increases the comfort of the ride with that burst of quicker acceleration and higher speeds, while the directional thrust yields tighter and speedier turning power.

It doesn't even end there. The Forward Drive also has variable trim that easily adjusts upward, which has obvious benefits for better watersports action as well as easier docking and cruising.





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Fine Tuning

So with the Volvo Forward Drive, the surf edition for the SCX 231 I/O also includes removable ballast bags, trim tabs, an extended swim platform, and Zero Off Speed Control.

The ballast bags are key because in order to wakesurf, you need to create a proper wake. With the ballast strategically weighing down your boat, you're able to cut out a deeper, shorter wave with a perpetual life cycle for the surfer to ride. The trim tabs and speed control make manipulating the SCX 231 I/O much easier while someone is wakesurfing, and the extended swim platform gives you more room to get your board set up and situated in the back.

Thanks to this incredible new surf system, people are able to dig into wakesurfing and other watersports—which is exactly what Starcraft wanted to inspire.

"The SCX 231 I/O is just an overall really good boat for us," Huber says. And you can't beat this special combination of luxurious amenities, gutsy performance, keen design, and new surfing capabilities. On a final word, let's just say you'll definitely want to go with the Tow Package, which comes with a wake tower, wake tower Bimini, wake speaker, wakeboard holders, and wake mirror. With this model's max horsepower of 350 and 50-gallon fuel tank, you'll be hitting those waves all day long. 🏄‍♂️

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STARCRAFT 231 SCX I/O

KEY SPECS

LOA	21' 10"
Beam	8' 6"
Dry Weight	3,300 lbs.
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Max Weight	1,850
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Barrel Race Results



Performance Pontoons Making History

By Brady L. Kay

The annual McKainer Barrel Race was part of our PDB Days celebration that was held at the Fourwinds Resort & Marina in Bloomington, Ind., last fall. The sponsors included Evinrude (www.evinrude.com), Mercury Marine (www.mercurymarine.com), Sunbrella Fabrics (www.sunbrella.com) and Suzuki Marine (www.suzukimarine.com).

It wasn't that long ago that it appeared pontoon boats had forever cemented their place in the boating industry as a leisure vessel designed for slow cruising, fishing and weekend lounging. Pulling a skier or wake boarder was clearly out of the question and even towing a kid on a tube behind your 'toon wasn't a guarantee. It's safe to say that a couple of decades ago, most people felt confident that two words in the dictionary like pontoon and performance seemed the least likely to ever come together.

It's too bad Ambrose Weeres, the man credited with inventing the modern-day pontoon, never had the chance to see just how far these pontoons—especially performance pontoons—have come today. Each year the pontoon hulls, engines and even the boat drivers seem to get a little better, which always makes for a fun tradition with our annual McKainer Barrel Race that started over ten years ago.

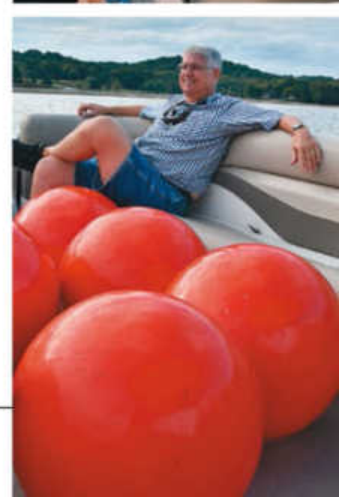
This year in connection with our PDB Days public boat show on Lake Monroe in Bloomington, Ind., attendees were given the chance at the end of the first day of the show to leave

the event at Fourwinds Resort & Marina and head out on the water for a closer look at the pontoon manufacturers competing for top honors as well as industry bragging rights.

Named in honor of beloved PDB contributor Dan McKain who passed away in 2008, the McKainer Barrel Race is a triangular-shaped course marked by large Taylor Made buoys that are spread out and anchored with three outboard categories this year: 135-150hp, 175-200hp and 225hp+.

A coin flip determines the order and each pontoon runs through the course twice. Five staff members armed with stop watches and positioned at the starting/finishing buoys record each run. The best averaged time on the boat's best run determines the winner. This year PDB Forum member Danny Norwood from Colonial Heights, Va., best known as **drive2boat**, was invited to be an honorary staff member and help time the races. He said he was in need of a good seat to watch the races so we figured the front row would be best for our guy.

PDB Forum member Danny Norwood (far right), better known as drive2boat on the message board, was invited to be an honorary staff member to help time the races as well as ride along after as we retrieved the Taylor Made buoys.





Outboard 135-150hp Class

The closest race of the day came in the first class, but it wasn't to determine first place. The Manitou Aurora 20 Angler SHP powered by an Evinrude E-TEC 150 H.O. and driven by Tim Peters clearly took the top spot by a large margin of nearly 15 seconds with an average timed run of 1:14. The winner circle is where you'll find Peters; at least that's been the case over the last few years with the combination of Manitou and Evinrude but we'll get to that in a minute.

It was the battle for second place that turned out to be the closest of the day. Nick Scafidi and the Island Boats 22/26 expandable pontoon (1:29) edged out Steve Hanson and the Sun Tracker Party Barge 22 DLX (1:30) by just over a second. Both pontoons were powered by Mercury 150 four-strokes and each boat topped out around 40 miles per hour at full throttle.





Outboard 175-200hp Class

For the second straight year, Manitou was the only manufacturer who participated in this class so the race was won before it even started. Peters put together another fine run for the crowd with an average time of 1:09. The 21 Oasis SHP paired up with an Evinrude E-TEC G2 200 H.O. recorded one of the top three zero-to-20-mile-per-hour times of just over four seconds with a top speed of 50mph.



Outboard 225hp+ Class

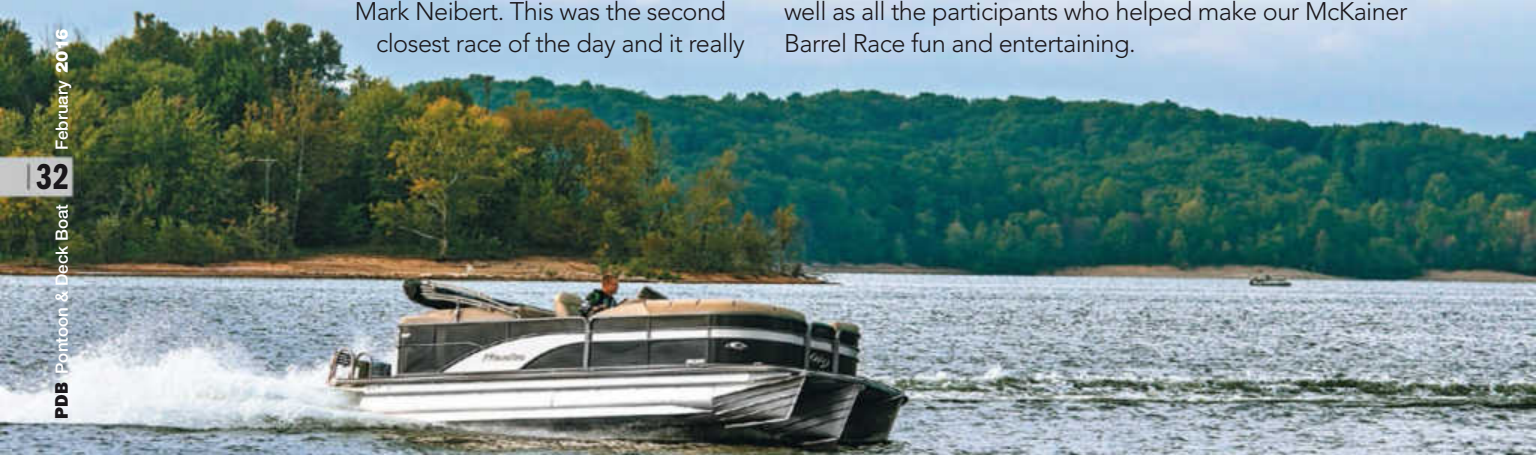
With his eyes set on sweeping all three outboard classes for the third consecutive year, Peters came forward for the final race of the day with the Manitou 23 Encore RF SHP and Evinrude E-TEC G2 250 H.O. To prevent Manitou and Evinrude from accomplishing the sweep, it was up to Sylvan, Premier and Regency to challenge the defending champion. With a zero-to-20-mph time of 3.99 seconds, the Sylvan S5 with twin Yamaha 250hp four-strokes put up an impressive averaged time of 1:11, yet came up a little short and settled for second place. Just a second behind with a run of 1:12, the all-new Premier 250 Velocity PTX with a Mercury 300 Verado Pro driven by Lance Iverson finished in third behind Sylvan's Mark Neibert. This was the second closest race of the day and it really

shows just how tight the competition really is.

Michael Massey, in the Regency 254 DL3 and powered with a Mercury 300 Verado Pro four-stroke, turned in a run time of 1:22, which means Peters accomplished the sweep with the overall fastest run of the day with a time of 1:06.

"The Pontoon and Deck Boat Barrel Race is one of the best ways for consumers to witness the unmatched power and performance of Evinrude E-TEC engines," said BRP Sales Vice President Greg Heidelberg. "Head-to-head races with the competition like this really put the engines to the test, and Evinrude, with pontoon partner Manitou, showcased the best that our products offer."

Congratulations to Manitou and Evinrude once again, as well as all the participants who helped make our McKainer Barrel Race fun and entertaining.





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The Full Details

2016 McKAINER BARREL RACE RESULTS

For the third consecutive year, Manitou's **Tim Peters** with Evinrude E-TECs swept the three outboard classes.

(From L to R) Island Boats owner **Tim Poppell** (L) stands in for his driver **Nick Scafidi** with **Tim Peters** from Manitou and **Steve Hanson** (R) from Sun Tracker. The three came together at the dock following the race for the trophy presentation for the 135-150hp class.



In the 225hp+ class (from L to R) Premier's **Lance Iverson**, Sylvan's **Mark Neibert**, Manitou's **Tim Peters** and Regency's **Michael Massey** pose for a quick photo.

Outboard 135-150hp

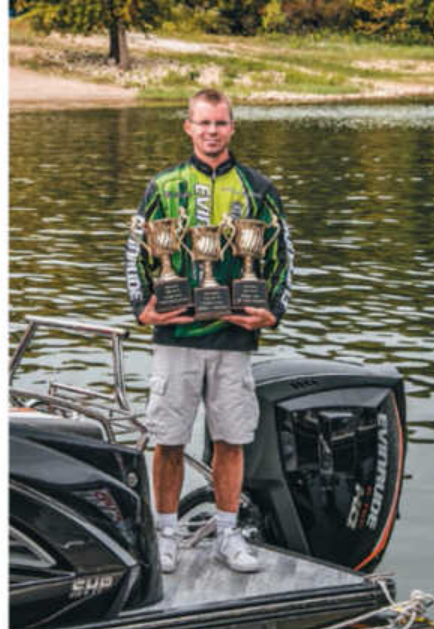
Boat: Manitou Aurora 20 Angler
Engine: Evinrude E-TEC 150 H.O.
Finish: First Place
Driver: Tim Peters
Hometown: Charlotte, MI
0-20 mph: 4.58 seconds
Top Speed: 46.1 mph
WOT RPMs: 5600
Best Avg. Run: 1:14:59

Boat: Island Boats 22/26
Engine: Mercury 150
Finish: Second Place
Driver: Nick Scafidi
Hometown: Juniper, FL
0-20 mph: 7.14 seconds
Top Speed: 38.6 mph
WOT RPMs: 5800
Best Avg. Run: 1:29:09

Boat: Sun Tracker Party Barge 22 DLX
Engine: Mercury 150
Finish: Third Place
Driver: Steve Hanson
Hometown: Shelbyville, IN
0-20 mph: 5.01 seconds
Top Speed: 39.0 mph
WOT RPMs: 5900
Best Avg. Run: 1:30:30

Outboard 175-200hp

Boat: Manitou 21 Oasis SHP
Engine: Evinrude E-TEC G2 200 HO
Finish: First Place
Driver: Tim Peters
Hometown: Charlotte, MI
0-20 mph: 4.03 seconds
Top Speed: 50.3 mph
WOT RPMs: 6000
Best Avg. Run: 1:09:26



Outboard 225hp+

Boat: Manitou 23 Encore RF SHP
Engine: Evinrude E-TEC G2 250 HO
Finish: First Place
Driver: Tim Peters
Hometown: Charlotte, MI
0-20 mph: 3.87 seconds
Top Speed: 52.8 mph
Best Avg. Run: 1:06:42

Boat: Sylvan S5
Engine: Yamaha Twin 250s
Finish: Second Place
Driver: Mark Neibert
Hometown: New Paris, IN
0-20 mph: 3.99 seconds
Top Speed: 51.7 mph
WOT RPMs: 5800
Best Avg. Run: 1:11:41

Boat: Premier 250 Velocity PTX
Engine: Mercury 300 Verado Pro
Finish: Third Place
Driver: Lance Iverson
Hometown: Ham Lake, MN
0-20 mph: 4.28 seconds
Top Speed: 50.2 mph
WOT RPMs: 6200
Best Avg. Run: 1:12:77

Boat: Regency 254 DL3
Engine: Mercury 300 Verado Pro
Finish: Fourth Place
Driver: Michael Massey
Hometown: Shelbyville, IN
0-20 mph: 4.96 seconds
Top Speed: 44.4 mph
WOT RPMs: 6100
Best Avg. Run: 1:22:03



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By Trevor Mason

Slag That Shag

*Say goodbye to
boat carpet*



I know what you're thinking: Why would I put carpet on my boat? Isn't it just going to get wet, then moldy and smelly? How have people gone this long without a different option? Well, I've got news for you, disembodied voice in the back of my head: they haven't! There have been options for a few years now, but only recently have they begun to get more notice in the industry. In fact, at our annual PDB Shootout Boat Test this past fall, very few of the boats we saw featured carpet as a standard option, a trend we expect to continue.

So what exactly are these options? Well, they're all some variant

of a vinyl flooring that is durable and easy to clean up in the event of an accidental (or deliberate; we don't judge) spill. Most of the options out there are going for a faux-teak look. It's not hard to see why: it looks great, pretty much no matter what. Actual teak flooring is not only expensive in its own right, but difficult to maintain as well. Plus, wood in general has a tendency to become slippery when wet, which is a condition a boat is going to be in quite frequently.

Granted, genuine teak decking is far more abundant in the yacht world, where cost isn't a concern (if you've got the scratch to buy a

\$10,000,000 boat, what's another 20 grand for the decking?). But since we like to have our cake and eat it too, many companies have developed marine flooring solutions that emulate the look of teak, but without its drawbacks. In fact, these flooring options are so attractive, durable, and maintenance-free that it's a wonder those bigger boats don't use it more.

But hey, their loss. As it stands, these options are becoming more and more prevalent in the pontoon and deck boat market, going so far as to be the default flooring option for many models. Let's look at some of the more popular options available.

Infinity Fabrics

After all that teak talk, we're going to shift gears a little and talk about a company that's going to be familiar to readers of the magazine: Infinity Fabrics. We featured Infinity back in our May 2015 issue. Infinity's contribution to the flooring industry is called "luxury woven vinyl." This specialized flooring doesn't stain, mold, mildew or rot. It doesn't retain water, dries quickly and will actually float if you throw a piece of it into the water. Not only that, but it comes in a staggering array of colors and styles, so no matter the colors of your boat, you'll find a match.

We caught up with Warren McCrickard, Infinity's director of marketing and communications, to see how things have gone for them since we last spoke.

"Infinity is thrilled with how the pontoon industry has embraced the transition from carpet to Luxury Woven Vinyl flooring, becoming the first sector in the marine industry to see the long term benefits of LWV allowing pontoon enthusiasts to spend less time worrying about maintenance and more time on the water with friends and family," said McCrickard. "Infinity is happy to be the pioneers in redefining marine flooring and helping to create a better recreational experience."

They've added color-corrected, high-resolution swatches to their website to allow customers to browse by color or collection, all in the interest of simplifying the shopping experience and enhancing the understanding of Luxury Woven Vinyl.

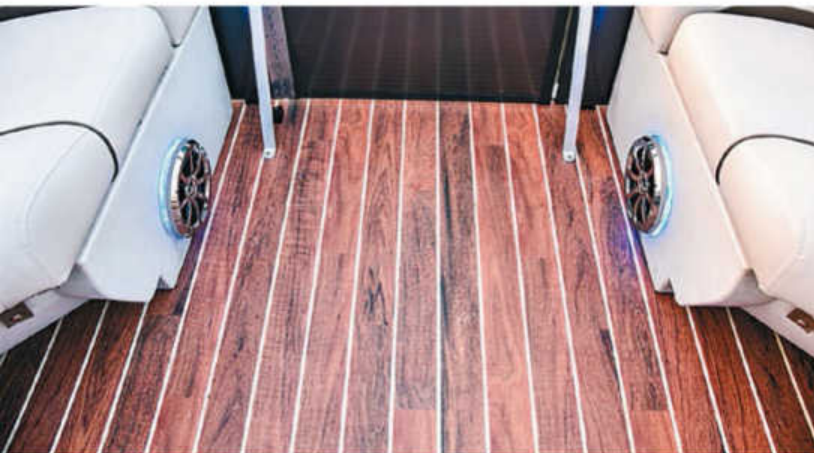
This year Infinity is expanding its offerings by providing the industry with Luxury Woven Vinyl Bimini material. Their SUPREME Bimini is a stain-resistant, colorfast, breathable Bimini that comes in a 60-inch width and 20 stock colors, all with a 10-year UV/Fade warranty and antimicrobial technology. Also for 2016 is their SUPERIOR Upholstery Vinyl, which is available in 51 stock colors in a 54-inch width. It comes with a seven-year UV/Fade warranty and resists the pinking and yellowing commonly found in current upholstery vinyl offerings.

One of Infinity's big selling points is how easy it is to clean. Pretty much any mess you can think of will just wash right off. It's a fantastic option the next time you're looking to upgrade your boat.

Warren concludes, "As the innovators behind Seagrass flooring, Infinity is excited for the future of pontooning and will continue to be on the forefront of offering the best floor covering to help keep those days on the water long and fun!"







PlasDECK

PlasDECK came on the scene in 2005, as a division of PlasTEAK. PlasTEAK has been making synthetic wood for marine use since 1995, so having a dedicated marine flooring division only made sense. We spoke with Jennifer LittleBear, international sales coordinator for PlasDECK and PlasTEAK, and she gave us the skinny on what they have to offer.

"PlasDECK boat decking is an excellent value because it is designed to last," she says. "When we developed the material, we sought to eliminate problems that people have had with other synthetic teak decking products in the past. PlasDECK won't dry out, crack, crumble or fade. It can withstand a lot of foot traffic. It is designed to look beautiful for many years."

As we've seen elsewhere in the industry, and at large in the world, too, people are all about personalizing

their stuff. PlasDECK has noticed that trend, and consequently have been focusing more on customization. They offer 24 color variations of their faux teak decking, of which the traditional teak is the most popular. Cooler colors have been on the rise, too, especially in areas with warmer climates. This is due to those colors, like CoolTEAK and Ash, being designed to stay cool while the sun is beating down. If you're looking for a sleeker, sportier look, colors like silver metallic and slate gray will fit the bill. One color in particular, Azure, has a very interesting feature: glow-in-the-dark caulk lines. Not only does this give your boat a striking, signature look, but it's a great safety feature, as well.

"We are able to work proactively with boat owners and boat designers to come up with custom colors to match any color scheme, and we can

make custom inlays or logos based on nearly any image," adds LittleBear. "The possibilities are truly endless."

PlasDECK uses the best UV protection available to make sure the decking always looks the same and doesn't fade. It also features an anti-fungal additive that prevents mold and mildew from becoming ingrained in the decking. PlasDECK is unaffected by bleach, so you can thoroughly clean your decking without fear of discoloration. It also has more accurate color and graining so that its appearance more closely matches that of natural wood instead of plastic. Best of all, if you ever need to repair any damage or perform any maintenance, PlasDECK is easily maintained. They have several guides available on their website that walk you through both installation and maintenance.

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SeaDek

SeaDek is another popular option if you're one of those do-it-yourselfers looking to replace the carpet in your boat with something better. One of the biggest draws of SeaDek flooring is that you can install it yourself. Their product features a textured micro-dot surface that greatly increases its non-slip characteristics, and it's formulated with a pressure sensitive adhesive that comes in a peel-and-stick application, so no mounting of hardware is required. Other features of SeaDek flooring include unparalleled comfort when standing, walking or leaning on boat surfaces, shock absorption, protection for boat surfaces against

scratches, chips and dents, and noise reduction characteristics, which is ideal for fishermen.

SeaDek flooring can be customized to fit a wide array of applications. In fact, if you have a specific design in mind, you can order a template kit, custom design it to fit your specifications, and submit it to them for production. SeaDek is available in 20 color options, including four faux teak colors. It comes with a three-year warranty on the material and workmanship, though the adhesive itself can't be warranted, due to outside issues that may be present during installation. If the product is installed properly, customers can expect a five- to seven-year life cycle.

Get To The Bottom Of Things

More and more boat manufacturers are going with some manner of synthetic flooring these days, and it's easy to see why. From a cleaning and durability standpoint, it has a clear advantage over carpet flooring. There are more companies out there than just the ones we've highlighted here, so check them all out to find one that fits what you're looking for.










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From High To Low

Bennington's Spectrum Of 'Toons



Wherever you're at in your boating journey, it's nice to know you have options. If you're budget-conscious or just dipping your toe in the water, entry-level models are ideal for giving you a taste of the features you'd like without a heavy price tag. If you've been hitting the water for a while and know exactly what you're looking for, or if you're raring to tackle more power or plusher amenities, then the higher-end of the price spectrum is where you'll probably head. Whatever level of boat you're

in the market for, Bennington Marine is a noteworthy example of a name that offers models that breathe a decidedly luxurious air about them while still showing maneuverability in the price for people of differing budgets. To give you an idea of what we're talking about, let us introduce you to the 21 SLXP and the 2375 RSB models.

Bennington 21 SLXP

The 21 SLXP is one of those boats that you can't wait to lounge

on. It has a visible "cushy factor" and this was one of the first things I noticed when we jumped onboard. With classic Bennington style, the SX Premium furniture showed off diamond stitching and its blend of five compressions of high-density foam begged to be tested. With comfort like that, it's hard to get up and explore the rest of the boat, but the classy silver-toned gauges were winking at me from the console and I had to check out their design.

The helm was beautifully balanced,



By Austa Cook



showing off that Custom Sterling Gauge package and Espresso Teak-accented wheel with an etched center cap without being overwhelming. The all-in-one Kicker speaker system was easy to access and the throttle was well-placed from the captain's seat, which combined forces to show another side to this pontoon. Turn up the tunes, flip on the LED lights, and hit the throttle, and you'll see that this model promises a fun and surprisingly zippy ride. The 21 SLXP handles easily and smoothly,

banking very well at both high and low speeds, and once you really get going you'll be surprised how easy it is to get upwards of 30 miles per hour for a nice cruising speed. With the Yamaha F115XB, we were really impressed with how this boat took to the water.

Overall, the 21 SLXP has a decidedly relaxing, easy-on-the-eyes feel to it. The chocolate-toned panels are soft on the eyes, especially in sharp light, and the three-quarter sundeck is perfect for catching some

sun. Little distinct touches like Bennington's logo on the speaker covers show this manufacturer's pride in the 21 SLXP and the boating experience that it promises.

So after reading all of this, would you say this model price is entry-level or high-end? I was straying towards the latter until I saw the price tag—a mere \$45,897 for the boat and Yamaha 115hp four-stroke as we tested it! You get a lot for that money and the quality is undeniably worth it. Well played, Bennington, well played.

Bennington 2375 RSB

While you can definitely sense a feeling of luxury on the 21 SLXP, the 2375 RSB is spellbindingly so. Arguably one of the best features is the beautiful swingback stern lounge that converts from L-shaped seating in the stern to rear-facing loungers with an easy lift-and-lock system. The captain's chair is a new Restyled V2 Pure Comfort creation that slides, swivels, reclines, and is undeniably decadent. There are two portable cupholders

with Espresso Teak trim and—what a surprise—cupholders inside all the fold-down chaise lounge armrests! It gets even better, because inside one of the armrests is a USB port for charging your devices.

Tell me that's not a unique design. And just in case you want to plug something in while you're lounging in the stern, there's another USB port and stereo remote there as well. Where is the actual Kicker stereo, you may ask? It's tucked safely away in the

cubby under the helm console but offers quick access when you're ready to use it.

Honestly, this boat seems to cater to your every need. Few stern areas come close to what Bennington has set up onboard the 2375 RSB, with high-end amenities in easy reach and the Satin texture weave backing padding everything. Touches like the woven vinyl accent strips under the loungers add a sense of very mindful craftsmanship in this boat's design.



The stainless steel and woodgrain accents throughout the boat (including the table) tie the high-end motif all together with a bow, and the Metallic Sorrel paneling with Champagne accents and Aged Teak with Ivory full flooring round out the woodgrain accenting perfectly. Factor in the optional Blue Ice LED cupholder lighting, side illumination, and underwater illumination, and you've got an incredibly plush boat.

But again, it goes deeper than

looks with the 2375 RSB. When I got to push the speed to its limits and test that Yamaha 250, I was blown away by the banking. This model was very responsive and it responded with instant acceleration and tight turns. It was exciting to really dig into those corners and experience just how precisely it will respond. You could really feel the difference the Elliptical Sport Package contributed to the 2375 RSB's superior handling and performance, all of which made it a cut above what

you expect in a luxury pontoon. The only thing that would make this model absolutely perfect is a wakeboard and ski/tow setup, because you don't want to miss out on such incredible performance. As tested with options and a Yamaha 250hp four-stroke, this boat comes in at the higher-end of the price spectrum at \$88K, and yes, it is worth every penny.

So there we have our 21 SLXP and the 2375 RSB, and while there are higher and lower priced models from this Indiana-based manufacturer, these two are perfect examples of showing the range that Bennington caters to in the careful design of its boats. And speaking very frankly, whether you're going for the entry or high-end, you won't be disappointed with anything that bears the Bennington name. 



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By Brady L. Kay

"Maintain the miles, maintain the smiles," was the line Yamaha Product Information Manager David Meller used to segue into his pitch to members of the media for the re-release of the Maintenance Matters Guide from Yamaha Marine. "Nobody wants boating to be a hassle. It's an ongoing initiative for us to educate all boaters."

Maintenance Matters began as a way to answer common questions all new outboard owners have, Yamaha or otherwise. As a Yamaha Master Technician, Meller was constantly being asked, "What do I need to know to take care of it?"

"The first volume of Maintenance Matters was created in 2007 to answer this question and was updated four times over eight years with more than 700,000 print copies," said Meller. "In early 2015, Maintenance Matters was completely overhauled and nearly doubled in content and level of detail, but still has the same theme of being an easy-to-read publication to help people better understand the basic maintenance requirements of their outboards."

What & Why

Geared towards everyone and not just those do-it-yourself types, the goal behind this yearly guide is to help owners be more aware of what needs to be done and why.

Using simple language, the format or style of the writing is similar to two guys having a conversation on bar stools.

"It's not a sales catalog, but rather designed to provide helpful information and there are even QR codes that link to videos too," added Meller. "The goal is to help them have a more satisfactory ownership and usage experience. It's really about helping them ensure their own satisfaction. Again, we use Yamaha outboards as an example throughout, but we consistently state that the basics really apply to most any outboard."

In the first year of the new redesign, Yamaha enjoyed an exceptionally positive consumer and dealer reaction to the new Maintenance Matters, according to Yamaha officials. So much so that the engine manufacturer has distributed over half as many this year as in the previous eight! That puts the total copies near 1.2 million published and distributed through its dealers, at boat shows and events, and to owners of new Yamaha outboards.

"We've put quite a bit of effort into the campaign, which is really an ongoing educational initiative that focuses on easy-to-implement tips that will help Yamaha customers add even more life to their outboards," said Heidi Weber, marine communications coordinator for Yamaha. "Topics include how to best clean, store, maintain and preserve Yamaha outboards."

If you have outboard questions, chances are good you'll find your answers within the pages of this guide. And there is also a good chance you'll pick up a tip or two that could save you time and/or money down the road. As you visit your local boat shows this winter, be sure to look for the Maintenance Matters Guide that are being distributed nationally.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Maintenance Matters Guides are currently being distributed by Yamaha Marine dealers, at boat shows and at other Yamaha-sponsored events. To learn more visit maintenance.yamahaoutboards.com.

Looking To The Future



Evinrude is laying the groundwork for a great year

One of the most anticipated events at our annual PDB Days event is the McKainer barrel race. Various companies compete for top honors and results are always spectacular (see page 30 in this issue if you missed it). But a fast boat owes its speed to more than just good design and handling. It has to have a good engine behind it. That's where Evinrude comes in.

Evinrude is one of the biggest names in the industry, across all boating styles. They really know how to put their money where their mouth is, as evidenced by their performance at the barrel race. The race is divided into three categories and Evinrude's engines powered the winning boat in each class. With such a strong showing, we decided to have a chat with them and see what they have in store for 2016.



Building A Strong Foundation

We spoke with Christopher Berg, the director of marketing and strategic planning at BRP, Evinrude's parent company. Right off the bat, he told me how proud they've been of the E-TEC G2. From the perspective of looking at their entire lineup, the G2 is easily their best-performing products.

"We introduced that product back in 2014, but it didn't really hit the boat shows until this past year, so we'll call this its first season," Berg says. "The reaction to the product and overall performance has been great. It's been our lead horse, as you can imagine, because it is sort of an indication of the innovation and technology and where the brand is going. We're pretty excited and happy about how we did this past year with that product."

The E-TEC G2 was a new platform designed to hit the 200hp and above range. High-performance engines usually start hitting at around 150hp, so this is the sweet spot. The G2 has done extremely well in high-performance pontoon categories, due to the fact that pontoon builders have modeled and introduced some really cool designs. Berg says, "They're really pushing the limits in terms of performance and expectations for consumers. We've done well because we're bringing technology that no one else has into that space."

Looking GOOD

The first thing you notice when you see an E-TEC G2 is just how cool it looks. Not only is the industrial design of the engine very sleek and modern, but the color options available are simply staggering. Consumers have the option of selecting from over 400 different color combinations, which includes the engine panels themselves, as well as the accent decals. In a world where most outboards are black, gray, or white and don't necessarily match the color scheme of the boat they're attached to, it makes a huge statement to have the colors flow directly from the boat to the engine.

According to Berg, "It's usually the thing that captures most people's attention. The whole industry in the last couple years has been trending towards consumers wanting something that's unique. They want to get away from that standard engine color, and we introduced that customizability as part of the G2 lineup. Particularly for the higher-end performance pontoons where, as you can imagine, the retail price tag on those boats is pretty considerable, that kind of consumer really wants the perfect match for their boat. At the end of the day, the engine and the boat need to look like they belong together, and that was part of our thinking. To that extent, we're the only outboard engine manufacturer that offers that to the marketplace."

The customization is pretty varied, due to the five panels on the engine that can be different colors, as well as the decal. Those panels—top, front, back, and side—can be mixed and matched to suit the owner's needs. It's an impressive look and something we took note of ourselves at the PDB Shootout. But we're not the only ones. As Berg explains, "It's been a really big hit. We knew that it would capture the market's attention, but it's really interesting to see how far some



consumers are taking it, and some of the really extreme designs. The boat builders are following suit; they recognize as well that there are certain types of consumers that want a unique boat setup and they're offering the same options to do that, whether it's upholstery or the panels or even down to the pontoons themselves."

More Than Just A Pretty Face

Even if the outward appearance of the engine and the myriad customization options aren't their total focus, it still functions much like the worm on the hook: it gets people interested because of how cool it looks, then once their attention is gotten, they discover everything else that the G2 has to offer.

Berg agrees. "There are so many other benefits to the engine in terms of technology, performance, and fuel economy that on a relative scale, [the color options] are probably not as impressive as what's going on under the color panels."

As he explains it, there are three pillars to the innovation of the G2. Those pillars are performance, design and value. Before we move away from design, there are a couple more things to mention that actually tie in to the performance. The first is an integrated hydraulic steering system. Because it's not an aftermarket system, it lives right on the engine and minimizes the amount of hoses and cables running to the engine, as well as giving the well a very clean look. It also features dynamic



PDB Power Profile

power steering, which can be considered something of a luxury on most boats, but is included on the G2. In fact, power steering has been the number one "wow" factor for consumers that test drive the engine.

Now that we've talked about the design, let's move to the big one: performance. With their new direct-injection technology, Evinrude is achieving at 20 percent more torque than equivalent engines on the marketplace. Berg says, "What that means for a pontoon consumer is that a pontoon is typically viewed as a cruising vehicle but they've become so versatile, and you can see it in the new designs from pontoon builders today, that they go from needing to pull a barefoot skier to wide-open throttle to barrel runs to the classic cruising. That's one of the biggest attributes from a performance standpoint."

The G2 also has a feature called I-Trim that automati-

cally trims the engine depending on where its RPMs are. It's one more feature that really enhances the overall experience.

The third pillar is the lifetime value of the product.

"Fuel efficiency is, at a minimum, 15 percent better than the leading four-stroke on the market today," Berg explains. "We also have a five-year, 500-hour, no dealer maintenance schedule, as well as a five-year corrosion warranty on our products. The first generation of the E-TEC line was three years, 300 hours, so we've stepped that up. What that translates into is obviously lower overall cost of ownership for consumers. Not only are we giving them torque at the top of that list and giving them the performance that they can only come to expect from Evinrude, but we're giving them great value with fuel economy, the consumer interface, as well as the warranty and maintenance costs."

Other Options

The E-TEC G2 isn't the only horse in Evinrude's stable. Aside from a wide array of engines that cater to all aspects of boating, they also have a pontoon-specific line of engines in 65hp, 90hp, 115hp and 150hp configurations. These engines have been



designed specifically with pontoons in mind. From the no-maintenance, 3-year/300-hour guarantee to having 195 fewer parts, the pontoon series is a boon to pontoon owners.

"All of those different horsepower platforms are performing well," Berg says. "It's been a few seasons now since the pontoon series has been in the market. We're seeing some really great momentum after the first couple years in. We've been putting more attention on the [pontoon] market from a network standpoint, as well as new product development, so we're pretty happy with the pontoon series' performance."

What's Coming Down The Pike

As ever, trying to glimpse the future in a crystal ball is murky, but Berg gave it a shot anyway. "I would look

forward to the industry continuing on a strong, steady course. Assuming that the interest level and participation in boating and fishing remain where they are, I think we're going to have another good year. Beyond that, I would say the second season of having G2 in the marketplace, and getting our products into more people's hands would be some of the things that we're looking forward to."

We asked about any future plans they have, but Berg didn't want to tip his hand too soon. He did share a few things, though, broader strokes of what they're looking into for the coming year. "Suffice it to say that, as illustrated by our pontoon series, the focus we put there, and the features and benefits of the new E-TEC G2 platform, those benefits can cascade down to different platforms and different-sized pontoons. I think it's safe to say that in the future we'll be looking to bring that technology to

more pontoon consumers."

They like to keep an eye on all segments of the market, and pontoons are one area where they're seeing a lot of innovation. Every builder pushes the limit in their own way, and it's Evinrude's job to stay abreast of those developments and bring innovations of their own. Berg finishes by saying, "We keep our eyes pretty close to the trends that are occurring [with pontoons], and anything we do from an innovation standpoint will reflect those trends."

As we've seen, it's no accident that Evinrude is one of the biggest names in the business. From their eye-catching design to the performance enhancements under the hood, they've got something to offer to everyone. We can't wait to see what's next. 

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.evinrude.com



**PRODUCT
TEST**
No. **193**

WEEGO Portable Battery Charger

**PDB
TESTED**

What can start your boat's engine, charge your cell phone, laptop or tablet, and yet still fit in your pocket? No, this isn't some clever riddle that's impossible to solve, in fact the answer is quite simple. The Weego Heavy Duty Jump Starter Battery+ is a must-have for any boat owner because of its versatility, plus it could come in handy if you ever have a dead battery on your tow vehicle.

Let's start with what's included for \$129.99: a pre-charged battery pack, jumper cables, wall and 12-volt chargers, 3-in-1 USB charging cord

(with Micro, 30-pin and lightning connectors), eight popular PC-based laptop/device connectors with

adapter cable, carrying case, owner's manual and a quick start guide. The small, high-powered Weego Jump Starter is perfect for boaters and because lithium-ion batteries only lose about two to five percent of their power per month, you can stow it under the seat of your boat all season long and forget about it until it is needed.

Sure you can stick to the usual plan and flag down another boater when your battery dies, but a smart boater is prepared and that's why we really like this Weego. —Brady L. Kay, PDB Editor

TOOLS

95

Application	20/20
Function	48/50
Durability	9/10
Design	10/10
Price	8/10

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**PRODUCT
TEST**
No. **194**

MATADOR Pocket Blanket

**PDB
TESTED**

When we first laid our hands on Matador's pocket blanket, we were taken aback by its compact size. Made out of Matador's proprietary Hyprlyte material, the 63-by-44-inch blanket folds up into a square about the size of a normal wallet. It's light, easy to fold up and not very bulky, which makes it easy to grab and bring along. There are red lines stitched into the fabric itself that show you how it should be folded. For somebody who tends to lose the instructions for things almost immediately, this is a great help. It also has a nice, soft texture, which could be ideal for snuggling up to your honey. Given its relatively small size, though, it works better as a blanket for sitting than for snuggling. It would be nice to have one that's a little bigger, along with some kind of wind breaking action, in case you wanted to use it as an actual blanket. It retails for \$29.99, which is maybe a little high, but it's finely constructed, so that price isn't too bad. As it is, it's great for setting down on a sandy beach to keep your stern clean. It also has weighted corners to

keep it from moving too much in the breeze. The

Matador is water- and puncture-resistant, which make it ideal for boating applications.

And seriously, its compact size is its biggest asset. It fits in any pocket and makes it a great addition to any boater's arsenal.

—Trevor Mason, PDB Magazine



PRODUCT 91

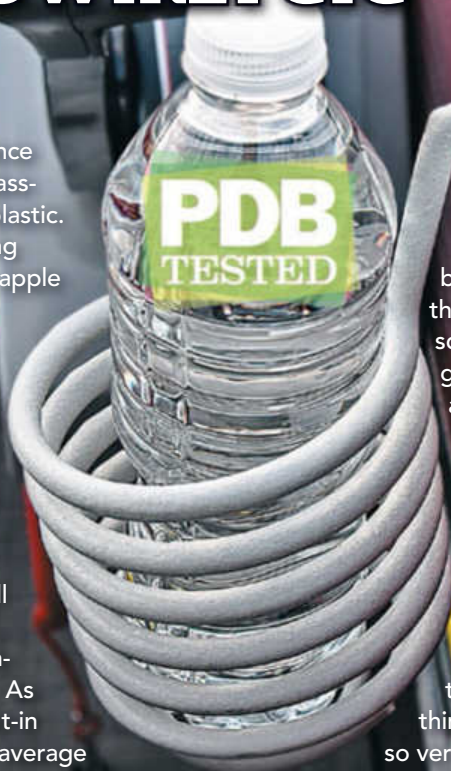
Application	18/20
Function	48/50
Durability	9/10
Design	9/10
Price	7/10

www.matadorup.com

**PRODUCT
TEST**
No. **195**

SWIRLYGIG StemDaddy Stemware

There is a difference in drinking out of glassware compared to plastic. Whether it's sparkling cider, wine, or even apple juice, having fluted glasses for your boat guests to drink from is an easy and instant way to turn a relaxing outing into a classy one, and SwirlyGig's StemDaddy stemware will give you the exact setup you need without the risk of spills. As we all know, the built-in cupholders on your average pontoon would have an impossible time keeping those suckers from tipping over.



With no drilling required, the set-up is as easy as clipping the StemDaddy onto your railing—and as an added bonus it can also snap onto anything else with an inch and a quarter square horizontal tubing, such as golf carts, canoes, patio chairs and the gunwales of some fishing boats. Salt- and UV-resistant, the stemware is made from heat-treated steel and coated with rubber for its famed grip and sturdiness. It normally sells for only \$15.99 but is on sale for \$9.99 and can even double as a holder for fishing rods, nets, towels, and anything else you can think of. For being so inexpensive, so versatile, and so durable, it's easy to invest in the StemDaddy to try for yourself. Pinky up, everyone, pinky up!

—Austa Cook, PDB magazine

GEAR 93

Style	17/20
Function	49/50
Durability	9/10
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BOATING TIPS AND OBSERVATIONS with Sky Smith



To view the full version of this column visit www.pdbmagazine.com or for digital subscribers, click here.

Drone & 'Toon

The FAA estimated that more than a million drones were sold over the Christmas holiday. Since I insure drones, I thought I might talk a little about the drone world and boating.

Many people think of drones as a nuisance, little noisy flying machines intruding on our privacy, agitating our calm and quiet airspace. Well, yes, they can be. But from a boater and a pilot's view, they can be fun to use and maybe even valuable.

Good and bad, drones have been in the news. In December, the FAA announced that all drones over 250 grams (just under 9 ounces) would need to be registered. They hope that the registration will help educate people about the rules when flying a drone, and give them a way to track down a wayward drone.

In my case, we are already registered because we want to use our drone as a commercial operator, meaning we want to get paid to fly our drone and take pictures or videos. To use a drone as a commercial operator currently, you have to file for an FAA exemption from the standard aircraft rules. It is kind of an overwhelming process and will take months before the FAA approves us. So far there are over 2,900 companies approved and there are probably ten thousand more that have sent in their request. I hope by the time you read this, I'll have my approval.

Where do drones fit into the boating and pontoon segment of the recreational world? I think it is back to the numbers game. Figure out how a business (and not even the big ones like Amazon, Wal-Mart or Google) can use a drone and bingo: the market is growing exponentially.

What are people doing with these millions of drones? As a commercial operator, I understand the use: photos, videos surveys, inspections and more. Hobbyist use is just a fun flying experience and unique photo opportunities, but it can be a lot more. Farmers and ranchers are looking at crops and livestock with drones. A drone can help look for wet or dry areas in a field or if an area needs to be replanted. Hunters are using drones to look for game trails and herd locations.

Even power companies are using drones to check their power lines. Oil and gas companies are using drones to make inspections on wells and pipe lines. Wind generator companies are using drones to inspect wind mills.

But all these ideas got me to thinking about my 'toon. Wouldn't it be cool to fly a circle around the 'toon and take a few aerial shots of the boat in the water? What about photos of the boat as we motored across the lake, drone and a camera following us?

And what about fishing? Is that legal? I watched a video in New Zealand where the drone took a fisherman's line and bait out past the surf and dropped it in the water.



Could I chum from the air? Or maybe I could use it to spot schools from my boat. Remember, I am not big into fishing or hunting so I have no idea if any of these ideas are even legal.

It sounds fun to me. But wait: most drones don't like the water. They are electric flying computers that short out and quit working when wet. That means I either need a drone that can land on the water or a waterproof drone.

Additionally, even though we keep getting better at flying the drones and even if the drones have a return home button, neither of those things guarantees that I can land the drone back on the 'toon in the middle of the lake. What are the boater's options for droning?

I discovered a couple. Take a regular drone and attach a few of those foam noodles to the landing gear and hope the waves won't flip it over. That idea wasn't at the top of my list, though; I put too much money in a drone to have it ruined in hard landing on the water.

The second option I found was one I really liked. It's called the Splash Drone. It looks like a regular quad copter drone (four rotors) but is waterproof. It uses a GoPro camera (or something similar) mounted in a waterproof case. The drone will actually float and land on the water and take back off. I'm thinking this is the 'toon owner's equivalent to the "cat's meow." That was a bad joke, but really, it has all the things I need: camera, waterproofing, and flotation, and if I miss landing back on the 'toon, it won't turn into an expensive submarine.

Our video production company has put the unboxing ceremony on YouTube and when we get some nice weather we will make a few test flights. The model I bought has an external load drop hook so I could, in theory, drop a fishing line or a very small life preserver from my drone. Guess that could make it even more valuable. Anyway, I'll let you know if it works as good as I hope. I'm looking forward to flying circles around my 'toon this year! 🚁

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